WORLD

113 feared dead in Nepal jetliner crash

11 Americans on Thai Airways plane

Associated Press

KATMANDU, Nepal — A Thai Airways jetliner carrying 113 people, including 11 Americans, crashed into a Himalayan mountainside in heavy monsoon rains Friday, minutes after the pilot reported a technical problem.

Airport officials said they doubted anyone survived among the 99 passengers and 14 crew. The plane, Flight TG311 bound from Bangkok, Thailand, to Katmandu, crashed in a mountain

Associated Press

Fire and rescue crews sift through the wreckage of a Chinese airliner that crashed while taking off from the Nanjing airport Friday. The Soviet-made Yakovlev-42 airliner exploded into a ball of flame. It was not immediately known if any foreigners were on the flight that was bound for the southern coastal city of Xiamen.

100 killed in crash, explosion of Chinese airliner

Fighting in Sarajevo kills eight, strands Bosnian orphans

Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Defenders launched a counteroffensive Friday in hopes of breaking the Serbian noose around Bosnia's war-ravaged capital.

The fighting left at least eight dead and 63 wounded.

Fifty orphans who were to have been shuttled to safety were stranded by the heavy fighting in the Bosnian capital. Five newly arrived Ukrainian peacekeepers with the U.N. contingent were wounded — two seriously, said spokesman Mik Magnusson.

Maj. Dervo Harbinja, a senior Sarajevo defense official, said the fighting, which broke out about 4 a.m. on the city's northern edge, created "one of the worst nights since the war began."

SCIENCE

Study suggests sexual orientation is not a matter of choice

Difference in gay men's brain structure cited

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Researchers have found a new anatomical difference in the brain structure of homosexual men and heterosexual men, a discovery that supports a theory that sexual orientation might be set by nature.

UCLA School of Medicine scientists Laura Allen and Roger Gorski report that in autopsy studies they found a brain structure called the anterior commissure to be 34 percent larger in homosexual males than in heterosexual males.

The finding, Allen said Friday, adds weight to the theory that sexual orientation is not a matter of choice, but of biological design or development.

Allen said early studies showed that hormones active just before and just after birth can determine the sexual behavior and brain structure of laboratory rats.

"Based on these animal studies, we would expect the differences to occur very early in humans also," she said.

"In the rat," Gorski said, "we have good evidence that brain is basically female. To develop characteristics that are typically male, the rat brain has to be exposed to specific hormones around the time of birth."

The hormones cause some structures in the male rat brain to grow by up to 500 percent larger than in the female rat brain, Gorski said.

In the new study, to be published today in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Allen and Gorski measured the size of the anterior commissure in tissue removed in autopsies of 34 homosexual men, 75 heterosexual men and 84 heterosexual women.

Allen said the area of the anterior commissure structure was clearly larger in homosexual males, by about 34 percent, when compared with heterosexual males.

The homosexual male brain structure area was 18 percent larger than in heterosexual females, but Allen said the 18 percent difference disappears when it is statistically adjusted for the brain weight difference between men and women.

The anterior commissure is a structure of nerve cells that connects the left and right hemispheres of the brain near the back of the skull.

Gorski said the precise function of the anterior commissure is unknown, but it is thought to carry signals between the cerebral halves.

Allen said the autopsied brains of homosexual women were not included in the study because of difficulty in getting specimens.

"I have looked through thousands of medical records and I have never seen the sexual orientation of a woman noted because it is really not medically relevant," she said.

Another weakness with the study, Allen said, is that 24 of the homosexual male brains come from men who have died of AIDS, a disease that could affect brain tissue.

To get around this problem, Allen said she is studying the brains of living people using magnetic resonance imaging, a technique that gives pictures of soft tissue, such as the brain. This study could include people of all sexual orientations.

Though this study has just started, Allen said there has been nothing found thus far that would contradict the report in Proceedings.

The UCLA study follows by about a year work by researchers at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in San Diego.

They found that the size of another part of the brain, called the interstitial nuclei of the anterior hypothalamus, was smaller in homosexual men.